

The purpose of this building newsletter is to clarify how building height is determined based on current Building Code provisions and Proposition D provisions.

Other departments may determine building height in a different manner and should be consulted prior to designing a building. For information on determining building height based on Planning or Zoning requirements, contact Development and Permit Information of the Planning & Development Review Department at 446-5000.

I. Building Code Provisions

A. Section 209 of the Building Code defines the height of a building as follows:

Height of building is the vertical distance above a reference datum measured to the highest point of the coping of a flat roof or to the deck line of a mansard roof or to the average height of the highest gable of a pitched or hipped roof. The reference datum shall be selected by either of the following, whichever yields a greater height of building:

1. The elevation of the highest adjoining sidewalk or ground surface within a 5-foot horizontal distance of the exterior wall of the building when such sidewalk or ground surface is not more than 10 feet above the lowest adjoining sidewalk or ground surface within a 5-foot horizontal distance of the exterior of the building.
2. An elevation 10 feet higher than the lowest grade when the sidewalk or ground surface described in Item 1 above is more than 10 feet above lowest grade.

Height of building in the case of a flat roof with a parapet or mansard-like projection is measured

to the highest point of the coping of the parapet or mansard-like projection.

The height of a stepped or terraced building for CBC provisions is the maximum height of any segment of the building.

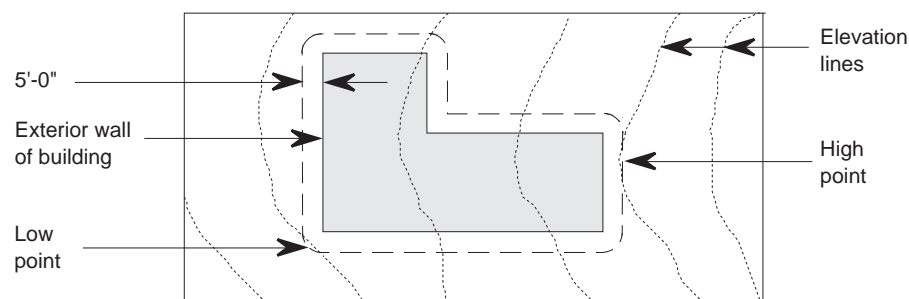
- B. It should be noted that the reference datum is found by first assuming a line 5 feet away from the exterior wall of the building or to the property line, whichever comes first. See Figure 1. The highest and lowest points within this 5-foot strip of land surrounding the building are then determined.

If the difference in elevation between these highest and lowest points is 10 feet or less, refer to Section I, Item A.1 above. If the difference is greater than 10 feet, refer to Section I, Item A.2. This is illustrated in Figures 2A and 2B, respectively. Figure 3 illustrates methods of measuring height for various roof types using both the CBC method and the Proposition D method which is discussed below.

II. Proposition D Provisions

- A. For buildings located in the coastal area between the Pacific Ocean and Interstate 5, except that area bounded by National City on the south, San Diego Bay on the west, and Laurel Street on the southwesterly projection of Laurel Street on the north, the provisions of Proposition D shall apply.
- B. Proposition D limits the height of buildings and structures to 30 feet. This height is measured to the highest point of the roof, equipment, or any vent, pipe, antenna or other projection. The base of measurement shall be in accordance with the 1970 Uniform Building Code which states:

Figure 1
Determination of reference datum



Grade (Adjacent Ground Elevation) is the lowest point of elevation of the finished surface of the ground between the exterior wall of a building and a point 5 feet distant from said wall, or the lowest point of elevation of the finished surface of the

ground between the exterior wall of a building and the property line if it is less than 5 feet distant from said wall. In case walls are parallel to and within 5 feet of a public sidewalk, alley or other public way, the grade shall be the elevation of the sidewalk, alley or public way.

Figure 2

Building height by Building Code provisions

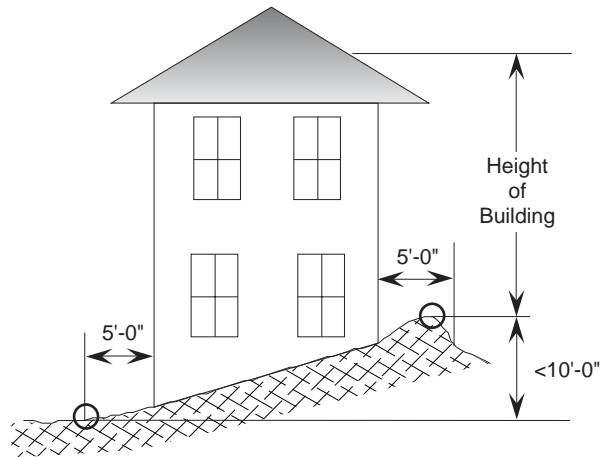


Figure 2A

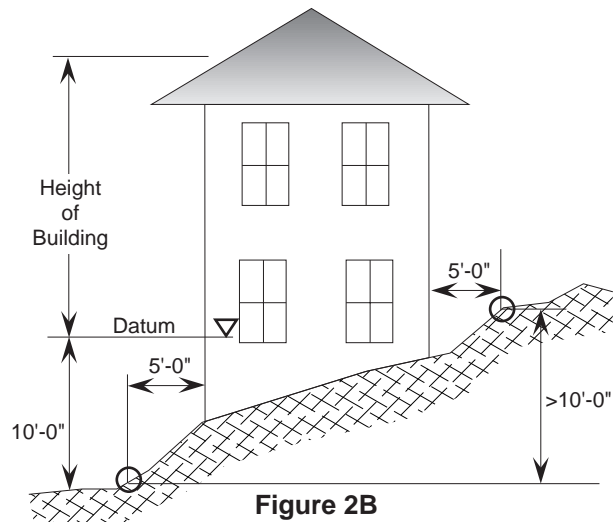
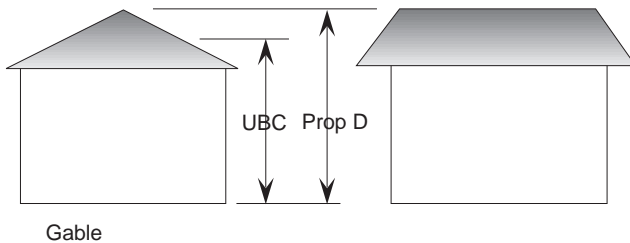


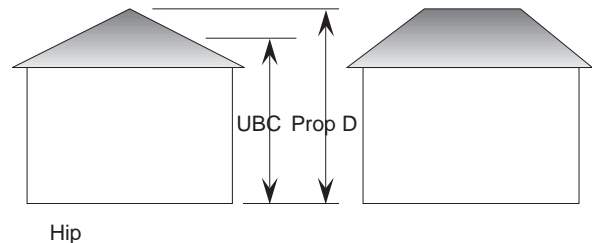
Figure 2B

Figure 3

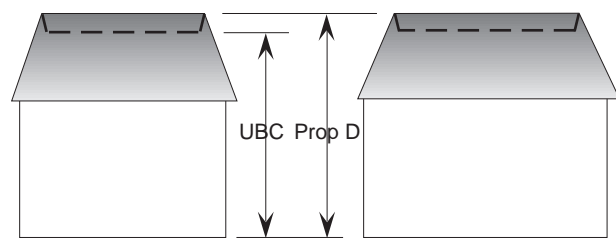
Building height for various roof types



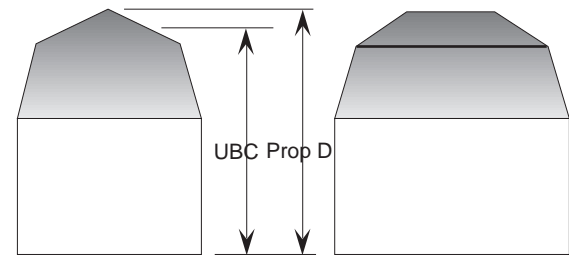
Gable



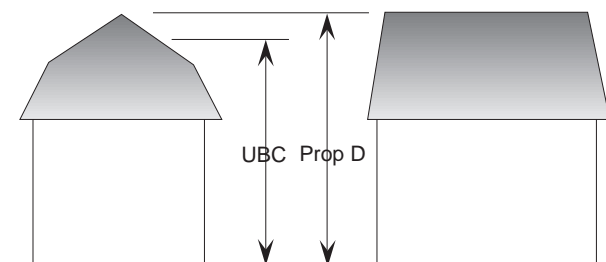
Hip



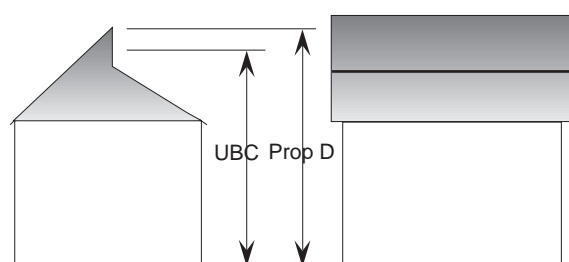
Mansard



Mansard



Gambrel



Shed

This height measurement is illustrated in Figures 4A and 4B. Note the difference in the height measurement as determined by the UBC and Proposition D. See also Building Newsletter 2-1 for a special case in determination of grade.

C. For Proposition D provisions the height of a stepped or terraced building is the overall height as shown in Figures 5A and 5B.

Figure 4
Building height in the Proposition D area

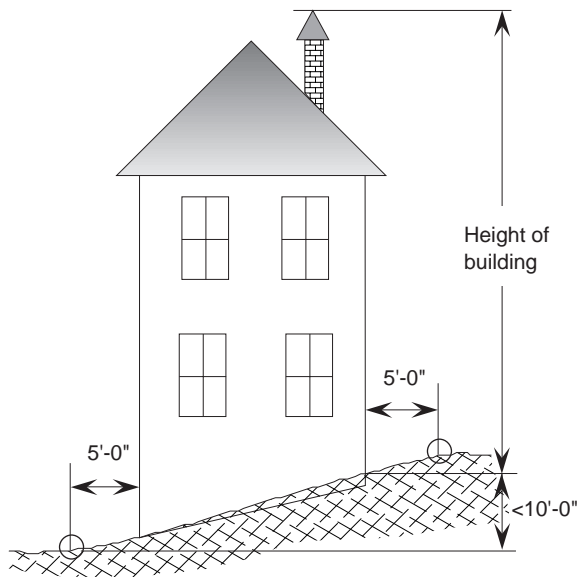


Figure 4A

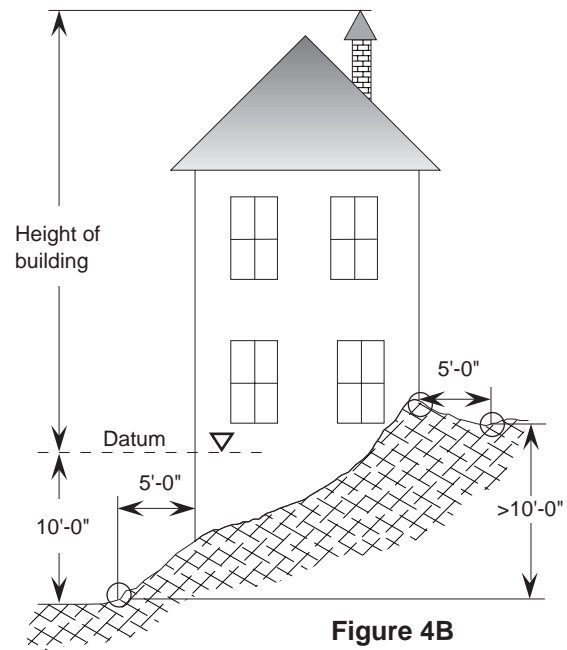


Figure 4B

Figure 5
Building height of a stepped building in the Proposition D area

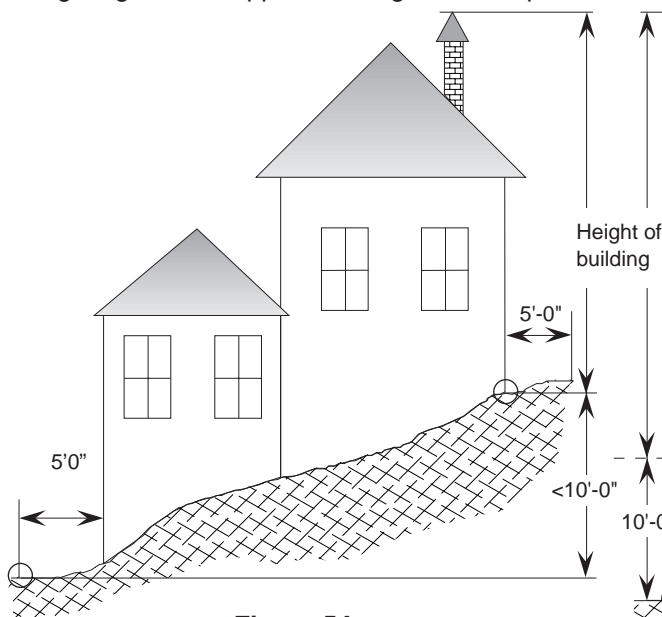


Figure 5A

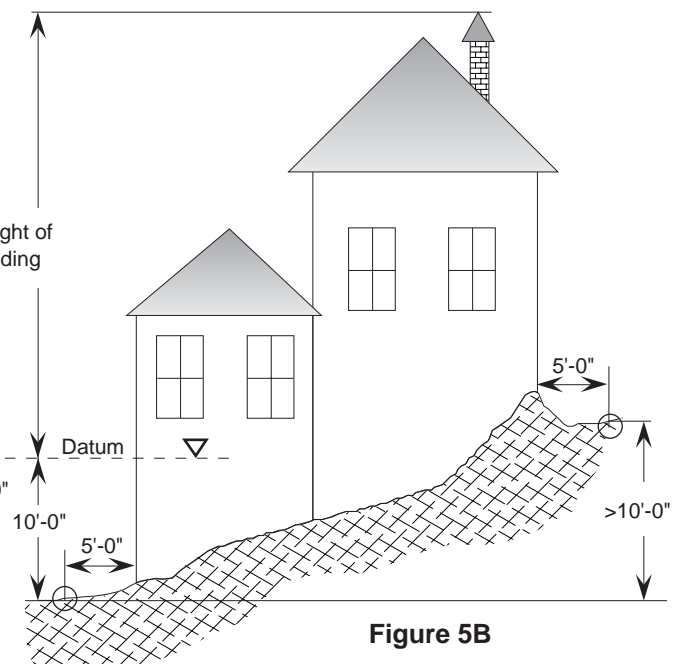


Figure 5B